

THE ITALIAN OPERA.

The experiment of the Italian Opera having been fairly tried since the present company visited our shores, and hardly a doubt remaining of its successful permanent establishment in this city, we hope long to enjoy every opportunity of making that refined amusement, the subject of interesting comment in our pages.

It is fortunate for us that we have no national school of music, our country possesses no recollections of chivalry, of troubadours, feudal contentions or scenes of romance to hand down to us in song the deeds of heroism which such events naturally create. The broad ocean which rolls between us and Europe, is not only the interposing barrier in political relations, but it is also the means of removing us so far from local attachments and preferences that we can make our selection without prejudice and form our taste upon the best models without embarrassment. We were then prepared to receive the best impressions which could be made, and when in 1825 Garcia delighted us with his troupe he was astonished that his best points could be appreciated. Before this period we had heard little of Italian music. Some recollect the *Buffo* of Carmoglio, the violin of Burke, and the songs of Trajetta; yet there was not sufficient to give us a favorable impression of the great cultivation which existed in Italy. When therefore it was proposed by Mr. Dominick Lynch of this city, to transfer Garcia's troupe from the London Opera House to New-York, the English critics predicted, the failure of an enterprise in a country where no evidence had as yet been furnished of any taste in the Fine Arts. "If London or Paris cannot support an Opera, said they, how can you expect success in the rude and uncultivated wastes of America." The solution of this problem is found in the fact that we had no national tastes to interfere with the great perfection of the art which was introduced among us. In England there are the melodies of Ireland and Wales, and the old ballads which were the foundation of a National School; and in Paris, the Conservatoire established for France the same predilections. These were to be subdued before the pure taste of Italy and Germany could be successful. The Italian Opera in England cannot succeed except it be assisted by the French Ballet, and in France it does not flourish from the great rivalry of the French Opera and its attractive decorations. When we hear Boieldieu and Auber placed by the side of Rossini, Webber, and Mozart, we

cannot, for a moment, be at a loss to discover the reason that Italian Music in Paris requires the arm of Government to sustain it. We are free from all these embarrassments, and consequently the success of the Italian Opera in this country must be less equivocal than in any part of Europe.

The impulse which Garcia's Troupe gave to musical taste in New-York, is the most extraordinary event which the era of Music can boast, and it determines a question very favorable to Italy, that cultivation to be good, must approach as near to nature as possible. This constitutes the perfection of taste—here the Italian School leaves in the distance the French and English Schools. They have reduced music to a code of principles, and not left it to the excursiveness of fancy. Whenever distances are fixed, comparison commences. The proportions of a Greek column became the standards to regulate design, and as our rule of beauty is deduced from its harmony, so are our notions of music derived from the expression of passion by simple intonation. Nature is then the idol of the Italian artist, and while he is corrected by its severity he is also chastised by its truth. To be successful the artist must have with him the skill to copy and the power to adorn a creation by grouping the scattered fragments of beauty, so as to form a standard originating in an equal mixture of judgment and feeling. It ceases then to be a matter of astonishment that our country is a ready recipient of good taste, and as soon as the unpractised ear recovers its tone, the power of appreciation will be more sensible and effective.

Again we have another troupe who came to seek their fortunes in the western world, and we venture to predict, if they bring the proper materials, the permanency of Italian Operas is placed beyond all hazard. The materials must be good or the labor is wasted. We do not ask that a Pasta, Sontag, or Malibran should constitute a part of these materials; but we expect that good singers will be given us. We might have been content with less if we had not heard Garcia, Malibran, and Angrisani, but their impressions have left with us standards that at least claim respectability in professional acquirement. The troupe of Montresor is good, but the sustaining power is in Signora Pedrotti. This lady is above the usual height, yet she is so well proportioned, and likewise so graceful that she appears not too tall or too large—her face is one of expression without much beauty, but her eye is so fine that every feature is lighted up with great intelligence. Mind strong and powerful, so pervades every attitude and expression—while her face exhibits intellection—

tual transparency—that you can almost see the agitation of her feelings and the conviction is strong that art is exhausted in the masterly delineation of nature. Her voice is Soprano, differing from Malibran's, which is mezzo-soprano, undoubtedly the best for portraying deep feeling. Her scale is good, although not comparable to Ferons, yet what she does she does well, and her great forte is that she attempts nothing wherein there is a probability of a failure. There is no exertion—every act is performed with ease and great truth.—There is never any over-excitement, nor does the sublimity of her conceptions ever degenerate into extravagance or bombast. She irresistibly carries the feelings into the very situation she endeavours to portray; and the admiration she produces is but in the great perfection of the representation. Her ornament is sparing but always well applied,—her shake good, yet rarely employed,—her roulades are thrown off with ease—her *appoggiaturas* strong and true. Her ascending chromatique is powerful and correct, but there is a defect in the descending which she skillfully conceals in *sotto voce*. She made her debut in Elisa E Claudio, and her success was complete, although her triumph was reserved for Il Pirata. Montresor, the tenor is good, but we think his voice defective, yet he has been educated in so excellent a school that physical disabilities disappear before great cultivation. The roles of Ramiso, Claudio, and Guallero are too high for him to execute with ease, or do himself justice. They impose upon him a constant exertion, which fatigues him, at the same time he loses expression. He executes the music in Il Pirata well, but his acting is far better. It is not overstrained but natural throughout. He is the very Antipodes of the Physical School—there is no rant—no extravagance—every look, feature, and attitude correspond—he is a most accomplished actor, and we think some of our pseudo-tragedians should avail themselves of this present advantage. It would not be fair to institute a comparison between him and Garcia, the great Maestro of Europe; they belong to different schools. His singing is not florid, nor does it seek exuberant ornament—it is without pretension, but it is full of expression, and is often electric. His last aria in Il Pirata is executed with great taste and precision. He never sings false and his recitative is given with great effect. His merit consists in great accuracy, correct delineation, happy conception, and finished execution, and although he is obliged to avail himself of the falsetto, if is interwoven so accurately with his *rocc di pello* as never to be disagreeable, or destroy the charming of his scale. Fornasari, the Bas Taille is a wonder. His figure is tall and commanding, and his face one of great beauty. Every physical advantage, however, disappears before a voice of extraordinary compass, depth, and execution. The bass of Angrasani was grand, yet it was stiff, and wanted that flexibility which so pre-eminently distinguishes Fornasari. It is most extraordinary that his fame never reached this country. He must be a formidable rival of Lallache and Zuchelli, and will, no doubt, when more years pass over his head, be at the very summit of his profession. He has appeared in Cenerentola, L'Italiani in Algeri, and Il Pirata; in all of which he acquitted himself with increasing reputation. His duet with Orlandi, Un Segretto, was admirably given. He sustained entirely the Italiani, and although most indifferently supported, gave great power and effect to his part. He is the lion of the Opera, and wherever he goes will always command attention and applause. Nature has been most bountiful to him, and if he does not throw away the rich endowments he possesses, he will, no doubt, grace a very important page on the history of the Italian Opera. He is still very young, and if applause do not stop his industry, he will soon be without a rival.

Signor Orlandi is the most perfect comic actor that ever trod upon our boards. Nothing can exceed his Magnifico and Inatazi in Cenerentola and Elisa E Claudio. There is no buffoonery at any time, and if he be a little extravagant, it seldom attracts attention with disapprobation. His voice is baritone, clear, and flexible, and always in tune, especially in recitative. In the mad scene with Pedrotti in Elisa E Claudio, he executes his part of the duet with great clearness and skill. He is an acquisition, and vastly surpasses the mummery of Rosich.

The operas which have been given are Cenerentola, Italiani in Algeri, Elisa E Claudio, and Il Pirata. The two first were failures for the want of a *Prima Donna*—the two last were eminently successful, and we believe, productive to the manager. The chorusses are well got up by Salvioni, and last though not least, Bagioli the director has given two delicious *morceaux* in Elisa E Claudio, and Il Pirata, which place his reputation upon high ground.

Our limits do not permit our giving an analysis of the Operas we have mentioned, which must, therefore, with such strictures as we may think of advantage to the musical taste of our city, be deferred to future numbers of the Magazine.